



Farmington River Watershed Association, Inc.

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March 7, 2012

To: The Members of the Planning and Development Committee.

Re: SB 343

The Farmington River Watershed Association strongly opposes SB 343. Our reasons for opposition correspond to those in the detailed opposing statements made by the Connecticut Fund for the Environment and the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters. Briefly put, this bill undercuts a basic right of citizens and citizen groups to speak out freely against ill-considered development. The conditions in this bill place unreasonable conditions on participation in public debate by those who seek to intervene in development decisions because of concerns for environmental impact. This could silence legitimate questions and concerns that should be raised for the public good.

The bill is unnecessarily punitive to the many environmental groups and individuals that conduct themselves responsibly as intervenors. It stigmatizes them as more likely than others to derail development or incur costs to the developer for purely frivolous reasons. The majority of environmental advocacy organizations in Connecticut know better than to engage in frivolous opposition. To say the least, there are more than enough serious and substantive environmental concerns to spend their limited resources on. We can't afford the strain that frivolity places on our budgets or our credibility.

FRWA does not speak out on proposed development for any reason other than genuine intent to prevent impacts that will impose unfair costs on the community as a whole over the long term, in terms of quality of life, public health, and robustness of our biological support system. The concerns and predictions we express are backed by the results of scientific studies. As intervenors, we restrict ourselves to issues where we have expertise.

By using too broad and heavy-handed an approach, SB 343's provisions have the potential to unjustly eliminate intervenors like FRWA whose actions are reasonable, well-founded, and have the best interest of a community in mind.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eileen Fielding". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Respectfully submitted," line.

Eileen Fielding
Executive Director